Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter: Some Salient Problems

Rev. Anthony Cekada

Q. Recently, the Fraternity of St. Peter has started operating near to where I offer the traditional Latin Mass every week. Fraternity priests tell people not to receive the sacraments at my Mass center because I do not have faculties from the local bishop, who is of course a complete modernist.

The Fraternity's criticisms of me aside, their operation leaves me very uneasy. I suspect I should tell my people to steer clear, but I can't figure out how exactly to explain the reasons.

I am not a sedevacantist. Do you have any reflections on the problems with the Fraternity of St. Peter apart from the pope question?

A. Apart from the question of John Paul II's legitimacy, working with or supporting the Priestly Fraternity of St, Peter (FSSP) poses a whole slew of ecclesiological, doctrinal and moral problems. Whether an FSSP supporter is willing to admit it or not, he implicitly accepts the orthodoxy, legitimacy and/or intrinsic goodness of the *Novus Ordo*, ecumenism, religious liberty, communion in the hand, liturgical dance, server-ettes, patently phony annulments, the new catechism, subjection to heretical bishops, legally-sanctioned intercommunion with eastern schismatics, etc., etc.

FSSP priests cannot condemn any of these things; Fraternity members purchase "official approval" with the coin of their silence. Nor, logically speaking, *could* FSSP condemn such things — for while their organization is enjoying official approval in *its* side chapel of the Conciliar Church, John Paul is at the main altar with the dancers for the African Synod Mass, an officially-approved female in another chapel is popping hosts in the officially-approved way into people's hands, and someone else in still another chapel is running kiddy Masses according to the officially-approved Children's Directory.

The traditional Mass and the traditional faith are thus reduced to nothing more than one dish among the many officially approved for the post-Vatican

II smorgasbord. Worship and belief become nothing more than a matter of "preference" — I like the old way, you like the new way, and we're all one big happy post-Vatican II family.

Lay people sometimes are oblivious to this broader picture. They see a traditional Mass, and presume all is well. It's not. In reality, the Fraternity of St. Peter is leading its lay adherents bit by bit into the high-church, nostalgia wing of the ecumenical, post-Vatican religion.

Such an aim, to be sure, may be far from the minds of priests and seminarians in the FSSP. But it is difficult to discern what reason they could give for adhering to the old Mass, other than pure, sentimental "preference." All FSSP members must accept the legitimacy and "doctrinal rectitude" of the *Novus Ordo*. Why refrain from celebrating a valid, licit and doctrinally sound rite of Mass if the pope himself celebrates it? It would be interesting to hear FSSP explain the theory behind its practice.

(*Sacerdotium* 14, Spring 1995)